



Afternoon Alert - Thursday, December 21, 2017

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HEADLINES

Noon news

NHK led with a report that the family members of the Japanese abductees were invited to speak at a Lower House special committee this morning, during which they called on the government to bring their loved ones home. TBS gave top play to a report that the U.S. House of Representatives passed a bill that will drastically cut the corporate tax rate, clearing the way for President Trump to sign it into law. Fuji TV led with a report that another North Korean soldier defected to South Korea this morning. TV Asahi led with a report on a fire that broke out at a house in Iwate Prefecture early this morning. NTV reported on the meeting held yesterday by the Japan Sumo Association over the assault incident involving Harumafuji.

SECURITY

Okinawa assembly unanimously adopts resolution of protest

NHK reported at noon that the Okinawa Prefectural Assembly unanimously adopted a resolution calling for the suspension of U.S. military aircraft flights over schools and hospitals following the incident in which a window fell onto the playground of an elementary school in Ginowan. According to the network, the resolution says: "A feeling of distrust is mounting among Okinawa people as these incidents vividly illustrate that the U.S. military's measures to prevent similar accidents are not working." The resolution also calls for the suspension of operations at MCAS Futenma within five years. The network said the resolution will be delivered to the USFJ and the Japanese government. NTV and TV Asahi carried similar stories.

Experts discuss recent accidents involving U.S. military aircraft in Okinawa

NHK carried a 13-minute report this morning on the recent incidents involving U.S. military aircraft in Okinawa. An NHK journalist reported from Okinawa that while flights by CH-53E helicopters were

resumed less than one week after the fallen window incident occurred in Ginowan, local residents are becoming increasingly distrustful of the U.S. military. The network showed a list of major incidents involving U.S. military aircraft this year, saying that many of them were serious and more than 20 occurred in Okinawa. The network reported that the number of noise incidents caused by aircraft late at night has more than doubled over the last five years despite the agreement reached between the GOJ and the USG to minimize flights around MCAS Futenma after 10 p.m.

Former senior GSDF official Noboru Yamaguchi said that the U.S. military is probably shifting to more intensive training based on actual battle. "Helicopters and Ospreys are vulnerable to cannons and missiles, so it's better to operate at night," he said. "In order to respond to extremely tense situations, night-time training is essential." He also pointed out that changes in the East Asia situation such as North Korea's missile launches and China's maritime advancement are probably behind the increase in night-time training. "The U.S. Navy, Air Force, Army, and Marines have no choice but to conduct high-paced military exercises similar to actual battle conditions with a sense of considerable intensity," he said. "Training at night is more difficult than during the day just because it's dark. What they do is also becoming extremely complex.... To put it simply, the number of procedures has increased sharply. I think there is no doubt that the organization as a whole is exhausted."

Noting that U.S. troops may be overburdened amid the increasingly tense situation in the region, Ryutsu Keizai University Professor Hideki Uemura pointed out that a similar situation was observed during the Iraq War. The network said the helicopter crash at Okinawa International University occurred during that time, adding that Uemura pointed out that the pilot at the time had been on duty for 17 hours for three consecutive days. Uemura said: "The Marines' operations were very tough and they were overworked. Both the mechanic and the pilot were overburdened." The network said there is a document that shows the current situation is becoming similar to the situation during the Iraq War, showing a list of Navy Class F flight mishap rates drawn up by the Naval Safety Center. The network said the rate was the highest at 5.00 during the Iraq War in 2004, adding that although it dropped for a time, it is gradually increasing, marking 4.40 in 2017. Uemura was quoted as saying: "I think the situation is similar. This is reflected in the rise of mishap rates." The network also said the U.S. Marines are facing a shortage of pilots and maintenance personnel. The network said while the U.S. military has concluded that resuming flights by CH-53E helicopters is not problematic because the fallen window incident was caused by human error, both experts believe that the U.S. military needs to thoroughly look into the reasons behind human errors in order to prevent similar incidents from happening again.

- [Okinawa demands suspension of U.S. military flights over schools](#) (Kyodo News)
- [Editorial: Swelling purchases of US weapons at asking prices raises questions](#) (The

Mainichi)

- [Japan cybersecurity survey finds 20,000 fake shopping sites](#) (Kyodo News)
- [Cartoon: U.S. military aircraft](#) (Akahata)

INTERNATIONAL

- [Japan House promotion center partially opens in L.A.](#) (Kyodo News)
- [Cartoon: Vladimir's long game](#) (Asahi)

ECONOMY

- [ANALYSIS: Brexit Britain may struggle to better Japan-EU free trade deal](#) (Kyodo News)
- [Singapore and Malaysia open bidding for historic railway link](#) (Nikkei Asian Review)
- [China set to allow Japanese companies to issue panda bonds](#) (Nikkei Asian Review)
- [Keidanren also calls for corporate tax cut in light of imminent U.S. tax cut](#) (Mainichi)
- [Japan tourism picks up in November to notch record](#) (Nikkei Asian Review)
- [MAFF to investigate unauthorized production of "forged" Japanese brand plant varieties](#) (Yomiuri)
- [Japan gov't urged to curb "rampant" illegal ivory exports to China](#) (Kyodo News)

OPINION POLLS

- [80% of Japanese and Americans see North Korea as military threat, Yomiuri-Gallup poll](#) (Yomiuri)

OKINAWA LOCAL PRESS

- [Okinawan company to start collecting U.S. base garbage on Dec. 21](#) (Okinawa Times)
- [Consul general meets with All Okinawa Council members](#) (Ryukyu Shimpo)
- [Number of U.S. military's criminal offenses increases by 14 from year](#)

[earlier](#) (Okinawa Times)

